



<b>Report to:</b>	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Update on bursary scheme
<b>Date:</b>	4 December 2012
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John McGrillen Director of Development ext 3470
<b>Contact Officers:</b>	Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives ext 3459

<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	Members will be aware that a report was presented to the 22 June meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee regarding the proposed bursary scheme. At that meeting, members were appraised of a range of similar schemes and a proposed pilot approach for year one of the Belfast scheme was presented, as a means of getting the scheme off the ground within the current academic year.
1.2	The proposal involved channelling support through Belfast Metropolitan College (BMC) for further and higher education support and Prince's Trust for other support to access education, training and employment. An indicative split of £30,000 to Prince's Trust and £70,000 to BMC was proposed.
1.3	Both organisations were proposed due to their respective commitments to cover the administrative overheads attached to the scheme as well as their ability to provide the required levels of financial accountability. A commitment to monitor the impact of the intervention and to review the scheme before year 2 was given.
1.4	At the 20 November 2012 meeting of the Development Committee, an update on the progress of the bursary scheme was presented as part of the overall Development Department update. Members raised concerns around the need to brand the scheme and to raise the profile of council's investment in the scheme. They asked that a further update on progress be brought to the 4 December meeting of the Development Committee for information.

<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	To date, a letter of offer has been signed and agreed with Prince's Trust for their activity. Around £10,000 has already been allocated to 57 young people from disadvantaged areas of Belfast (average age of recipient is 21 years). 79% of these awards have provided to young people living in the top 25% of

	deprived wards in Belfast and 96% (55 Awards) have been provided to young people who are unemployed.
2.2	In terms of outcomes, 87% of young people who have received an award have achieved a positive outcome, moving into education, training or employment.
2.3	Now that the programme is fully operational we expect to see an increased level of activity over the remainder of the financial year, with over 42 Awards currently in the pipeline over the next few months.
2.4	With regard to Belfast Metropolitan College work, eligibility criteria have been established (individuals must be resident in the Belfast City Council area; aged 16-24 at the date of application; must meet the criteria set out by the College for the HE bursary fund and must be preparing to study or currently studying on a full-time further/higher/vocational education training course at Levels 2-5 on one 20 priority courses identified). It was anticipated that the awards would be to a value of £500 and would be allocated only if it could be confirmed that the student completed at least 80% attendance at all classes and all appropriate examinations and assessments.
2.5	Given the timing of the programme, BMC was not able to include advance promotion of the scheme in any of its promotion literature for courses. As a result the funding available was not able to act as an incentive towards a particular course of study, as had been initially intended. The college was making progress in identifying those students who would potentially meet the eligibility criteria for the awards.
2.6	Following this update provided at the 4 December 2012 meeting of the Development Committee, members proposed that the £70,000 amount allocated to the BMC bursaries for the current academic year be held and carried forward into next year to allow greater profiling of the awards and to incentivise more young people to study in priority skills areas. Members also asked that consideration be given to the household income criteria set by BMC for its existing bursary programme (currently £55,000) and suggested that the council scheme should set a lower threshold. It was noted that this decision would be subject to agreement by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	An overall budget of £300,000 was allocated to the bursary scheme over a 3 year period 2012-2015.

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b>
4.1	No specific equality and good relations considerations at this stage.

<b>5</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
5.1	Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Note the update on the bursary scheme</li> <li>• Note the proposal by the Development Committee that the £70,000 amount allocated to the BMC bursaries for the current academic year be carried forward into next year to allow greater profiling of the awards and to incentivise more young people to study in priority skills areas.</li> </ul>

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<b>6</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
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An update on the proposals for year 2 of the programme will be brought back to Committee in February 2013.
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<b>7</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
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BMC – Belfast Metropolitan College
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